

Busy week leaves STS confident of demerger

A very active week for the Save Tumbarumba Shire (STS) group has left members confident that the former Tumbarumba Shire will be restored.

Last Wednesday, a delegation from Save Tumbarumba Shire drove to Sydney to deliver the second, substantially enlarged version of their proposal to dissolve Snowy Valleys Shire and recreate the former Tumbarumba Shire.

Members met with the Minister for Local Government, Environment, and Heritage, the hon. Gabrielle Upton MP, and made their case for independence.

"We had tried repeatedly to meet with her over the past couple of years without success, but thanks to the efforts of a federal senator with interests in Tumbarumba, we eventually secured an appointment," STS member Neil Hamilton said.

Those who attended said the meeting was "cordial, respectful, and positive".

"The Minister accepted our

proposal, said that it would be assessed for technical validity by the Office of Local Government, and that she would be advised by them as to the appropriate course of action she can take," Mr Hamilton said.

"We discussed examples of the disfunction that has been entrenched by the forced merger and made it clear that we would continue fighting and inflicting political pain until we won this battle.

"The Minister made a significant political concession during the meeting.

"She said that the government would fairly consider any demerger proposal put before them, repeating a similar statement that she made in Wagga earlier in the week.

"This contrasts with the earlier statements of the Premier that there would be no demergers. In short, the impossible just became possible," he said.

In the days leading up to Wagga



Doug Gee, Neil Hamilton, Minister Gabrielle Upton and Lucy Henderson with the proposal.

by-election, STS canvassed all seven candidates to ascertain their positions on the forced mergers and published the replies of all those who responded.

All of them supported their position, apart from Liberal candidate Julia Ham, who did not respond to the group's request.

The group also manned the

pre-poll booth in Tumut for the entire week prior to the election to support all candidates who supported them.

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On Saturday, a bus-load of Tumbarumba citizens went to Wagga to make their presence felt at voting places across the electorate.

"There were more than a few surprised faces among the Young Liberal glitterati, who had been flown in to support their candidate, and they furiously worked their phones to ensure Gladys and friends didn't show up where the orange army was," Mr Hamilton said.

"We were told on good authority that she actually arrived at one booth for a scheduled visit, saw the orange army, and took off.

"Pathetic really, that the Premier of NSW is so gutless that she wouldn't even talk to her citizens.

"We did manage to find Julia at a couple of booths and made sure that voters were

aware of the treachery of the NSW Liberal Party," he said.

Those who attended reported that the most critical moment of the day was an on-camera discussion they had with the Leader of the NSW Opposition, Luke Foley.

"Having gone to the trouble to seek us out, Mr Foley made his position crystal clear: If his party forms government next March he will give the people of the former Tumbarumba Shire, not the people of Snowy Valleys Shire, a plebiscite, to choose whether they wish to demerge, and that he will immediately implement our wishes," Mr Hamilton said.

"Given the polls, this seems highly likely to happen."

Mr Hamilton said he is now "absolutely convinced" that STS's wishes will be granted and that they will get their Shire back.

"All of the action over the past week is so important because the name 'Tumbarumba' is now on the lips of those in Macquarie St, and we have commitments that give real hope to our cause," he said.

"The government knows that we can and will continue to inflict pain.

"A demerger would remove a barnacle issue before the election and prevent the loss of further seats.

"It's the only backflip left for Gladys to perform."

Mr Hamilton believes the community of Tumbarumba Shire needs to begin planning for the future.

STS will shortly announce a public meeting to explain what has happened, and to give people the opportunity to think and discuss what they might do in the coming months to prepare themselves for a potentially new world.